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ABSTRACT

Two articles address issues in the development of French and Spanish language programs in elementary schools: instructional materials and time and money factors. The information presented is drawn from experience in developing the Radford, Virginia FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) program. The first article describes some aspects of the Radford program and lists recommended instructional materials for French and Spanish, including basic texts, Total Physical Response materials, supplements to the basic text, videotapes, computer software, games, audiotapes, filmstrips, teacher reference books, readers, flashcards, workbooks, and other helpful items. Publishing company names are included. The second article describes the Radford planning experience in scheduling and financing its program. (MSE)

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GETTING STARTED with French or Spanish in the Elementary School: FLES Materials and The Cost in Time and Money

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GETTING STARTED with French or Spanish in the Elementary School: FLES MATERIALS

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If you are considering a foreign language program in the elementary school, we in the Radford City Schools urge you to move into the planning stage, for we believe that initiating our FLES [Foreign Language in the Elementary School] program in 1984 was one of the smartest things we have done. We have no regrets and we would do it again.

The FLES program in our small city, located in Southwest Virginia, started as a three-year pilot project, funded in part through the pilot studies program in the Virginia Department of Education. We offer Spanish and French programs which span grades 4 - 6 for all students in our elementary school. Students receive a continuous, three-year language program of either Spanish or French. At the seventh grade, which is the first year of middle school, students may continue to study the language. At eighth grade, students have the opportunity to begin their language study for high school credit. Some stay with the FLES language, others choose a new language, and others take no language or delay language instruction.

The Radford FLES program is based on two assumptions. First, we should learn from the past. Our program is called Re-FLES because we attempted to use a revitalized FLES approach. We studied the programs that had survived during a period when many foreign language programs had died. We also looked at the reasons programs die and attempted to build in safeguards so that our program would survive and become institutionalized. Our second assumption was that any new program should be built upon current educational research. So the teachers who developed the curricula and materials included sound instructional practices for foreign language instruction, such as Total Physical Response, as well as good practices from the elementary classroom.

During the pilot project, the two language specialists, who taught all of the classes, developed the curricula and had the opportunity to purchase any materials they wanted. While it is unfortunate that there are limited materials and textbooks for FLES instruction, the funds available through the pilot project allowed the teachers to purchase almost anything that they thought would be useful in a FLES program. Materials ranged from workbooks to computer software to puppets.

One of the dissemination activities of the Radford project was to formally evaluate all materials purchased for the French and Spanish programs. After these materials were evaluated, the foreign language teachers were asked to

choose the materials they would recommend to other educators who would be setting up programs with limited funds or resources. The teachers compiled a list of the best materials which they use, those items they would purchase if starting a FLES program in another location. As in any subject area, we found many good supplementary materials which aid in the instructional process. We also purchased some not-so-good items which we could not recommend.

In response to a frequently asked question - *What materials and textbooks do you recommend?* - the following items are suggested for students in grades 4 - 6 in year-long FLES instruction.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS FOR FRENCH

	Publisher
Basic Texts	
Horizons 1	Addison-Wesley
Promenades Series	Addison-Wesley
Vive le Français 2	Addison-Wesley
TPR (Total Physical Response) Materials	
L'Enseignement par le Mouvement	Sky Oaks Productions
Springboard for FLES	The Language School
Supplements to Basic Text	
Le Français Chez Nous	Aquila Publications
Tactics - face a face	Addison-Wesley
The Learnables	International Linguistics
Videotapes	
Bonjour France	Reader's Digest
Provinces of France	Teacher's Discovery
Red Balloon	Embassy Home Entertainment
Sugarcane Alley	Middlebury College
The French Language	Teacher's Discovery
White Mane	Embassy Home Entertainment
Computer Software	
Competer Rabbit	Gessler Publishing Co.
La Guillotine	Teacher's Discovery

Filmstrips

Filmstrips for Beginners	Gessler Publishing Co.
I Live in France	Troll Associates
Why Foreign Languages?	Gessler Publishing Co.

Games

Bien Joue	Gessler Publishing Co.
Demande-Moi Bingo	Teacher's Discovery
International Bingo	Gessler Publishing Co.
Taureau	Teacher's Discovery
Victoire!	Gessler Publishing Co.

Helpful Items

Certificat de Merite	Gessler Publishing Co.
French Name Tags	Gessler Publishing Co.
Jeus Imaginatifs et Creatifs	Gessler Publishing Co.
Le Monde de Langue Française	International Language Resources
Weather Board	Gessler Publishing Co.

RECOMMENDED MATERIALS FOR SPANISH

	Publisher
Basic Texts	
Bienvenidos	D. C. Heath
Comencemos	McGraw Hill
Vamos Amigos	Longman Books
Tapes	
Spanish for Children	The Language School
The Learnables	Sky Oaks Productions
Computer Software	
Basic Vocabulary Builder	National Textbook Co.
Beat the Clock	Teacher's Discovery
El aterrizaje	Wible Language Institute
Hangman	Teacher's Discovery

Videotapes

Argentina	Teacher's Discovery
Colorful Mexico	Teacher's Discovery
Comerciales en español	Teacher's Discovery
Spain a la carte	Teacher's Discovery
Spain and the Costa del Sol	Teacher's Discovery
Spanish Culture - The Glory of Spain	Teacher's Discovery
Spanish Living Language	Teacher's Discovery

Filmstrips

Christmas in Mexico	Gessler Publishing Co.
Life in Spain	Gessler Publishing Co.
Why Study a Foreign Language?	Gessler Publishing Co.

Books for Teacher Reference

101 Terrific Tips for FL Teachers	Teacher's Discovery
300 Word Games for FL Classes	J. Weston Walch
Hablan los niños / Hablan más los niños	National Textbook Co.
Let's Play Games in Spanish	National Textbook Co.

Readers

First Start Easy Readers	Troll Associates
Habia una vez	National Textbook Co.
Horas encantadas	National Textbook Co.
I Can Read Spanish	Franklin Watts
The First 1000 Words in Spanish	Gessler Publishing Co.

Flashcards

Flashcards (#310)	Wible Language Institute
Initial Sounds in Spanish	Kentucky School Service
Language Visuals	National Textbook Co.

Workbooks

A Spanish Fun Book	Longman Books
Bienvenidos	D. C. Heath
Know How in Spanish	Longman Books

GETTING STARTED with French or Spanish in the Elementary School: THE COST IN TIME AND MONEY

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When you're planning a new program in the elementary school, you hear two questions. The first, which is really two related questions, comes from classroom teachers: *When are we going to teach this; what are we going to give-up in order to teach this?* If you're planning the same program, regardless of what it is, and you're talking to administrators about it, you'll hear them ask: *How much is this going to cost?*

Both the teachers and the administrators have legitimate concerns. With a tightly packed curriculum in the elementary school, and especially with a renewed emphasis on basic skills and time-on-task, how can we possibly find time to add anything into the school day without giving-up something we are doing now? When we know that adding a program is not a one-time cost, that it is something which will demand more resources each year as teacher salaries and classroom materials increase in cost, how can we afford to add any programs?

When we in the Radford City Schools, Radford, VA, decided to develop a FLES (Foreign Language in the Elementary School) program for grades 4-6 for all students, we had to address these questions. Answering these questions to the satisfaction of those asking the questions was very important. First, those asking the questions had a right to some answers because a program of this magnitude would impact upon teachers and principals tremendously. After all, we weren't just saying, "Here's something to work into your social studies program," or "Here's something to do on Friday afternoons." Nor were we proposing a program which would be cost-free; there would be on-going expenses both in teacher salaries and in instructional materials. Secondly, we learned from the research conducted to determine characteristics of successful and unsuccessful FLES programs that their success and ultimate institutionalization was due in great part to support from administrators and classroom teachers.

TIME

In order to determine if in fact there was time in the current school day for another program, we examined the daily teaching schedule of each teacher in the grades to be affected by FLES [grades 4-6]. We found two things. First, teachers had one subject, *health*, scheduled for the entire year. Yet we knew that the health curriculum we were teaching was not a year long program.

Teachers were generally using the time they had when they completed the health to supplement other subject areas. Secondly we found that in those grades teachers were building in study periods for students to begin their homework. We believed that these were not guided practice activity periods but were study halls. We in the school district were philosophically opposed to study halls as we believed that teachers should build in guided practice as a part of the lesson, and that homework should be used to reinforce skills and concepts and should be done independently.

Thus, we found two blocks of extra time which we felt we could access for foreign language instruction. We really believed that implementing this program would not impact negatively upon our existing curriculum. In fact we were convinced that instruction in foreign language would strengthen the language skills of our students, encourage the study of languages at the secondary level, and, perhaps, build self-concept by giving all students--gifted, special education, the average--an opportunity to be successful in a new subject which was to be ungraded.

In planning the program, we decided to offer language instruction three times a week for a class period at a time. Our schools were on slightly different schedules, so that meant the instruction varied from 40 minutes to 45 minutes per day in a school. Each child in grades 4-6 had either French or Spanish a minimum of 120 minutes per week. FLES was scheduled as any other program. Students already had specialists teaching music, physical education, and art, so the students viewed this as another special program taught by an itinerant teacher. During FLES classes, classroom teachers were given planning time, but some teachers, especially during the first year, stayed in the classroom to observe the FLES program.

During annual program evaluations, we solicited comments from classroom teachers about the program. Only one teacher ever mentioned that FLES was taking away time from her class--time which she had previously used to read aloud to her students. No teacher ever complained that FLES was detracting from the elementary program by stealing valuable time. Our teachers were supportive of the program from its beginning. FLES specialists who taught French and Spanish were satisfied with the time allocations. While they believed that a daily lesson would be ideal, they felt that two or three 45-minute periods a week would be adequate for a FLES program.

MONEY

Start-up costs for a new program are critical. But of even more importance is the long-term cost of any program. We were concerned from the beginning of our program that the school administration and school board were committed enough to FLES that foreign language wouldn't be eliminated during a budget crisis.

Our school division was fortunate to receive $30,000 from our state department of education over a three year period. This money was granted as part of the pilot studies program in the department.

The project budget reflected line items for salaries and fixed charges, supplies and materials, travel, and evaluation. Most of the cost of the program was in teacher salaries and benefits, but a substantial amount was budgeted during the first three years for materials [textbooks were purchased from this account during the first three years]. An external evaluator conducted the evaluation of the FLES project during the first three years. Travel was limited. During the first year of the project, both teachers and the project director traveled to Lexington, MA to visit the long-standing French program in the elementary schools, and the project director attended a national foreign language meeting for dissemination during the third year.

During FLES' first year, the teachers were hired as consultants [i.e. on an hourly rate]. Beginning with year two, they were placed on the regular teacher salary scale. One teacher was, and remains, full-time; the other teacher is part-time.

Radford City is a small division. During the time of this project, there were five classes each of fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. This is important to remember in looking at the budget.

The cost of the FLES program for the first three years was as follows:

1984-85 - $25,000
1985-86 - $35,000
1986-87 - $50,500

During 1986-87, the cost per student for FLES was $147.66.

CONCLUSION

School administrators must evaluate each individual situation before determining the cost-effectiveness of a program. We in Radford have no regrets about the cost in time or money for our FLES program. The results with the languages are excellent, and our test scores in other subject areas confirm that the time stolen away for FLES has not impacted negatively upon other subject areas.